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Vital Truth and Deadly Error - 1853

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of Cambridge,
(Class of 1825.)
20 Nov., 1861.

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VITAL TRUTH

AND

DEADLY ERROR.

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto ANOTHER GOSPEL: WHICH IS NOT ANOTHER; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ." GAL. i, 6, 7.

"To be IMPUTED and to be INHERENT differs no less than God and man, Trent and Heaven." BP. HALL.

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TO

ALL THE PEOPLE OF CHRIST,

AND ESPECIALLY

TO MY BRETHREN OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

This humble Contribution

TO THE

MANIFESTATION OF THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS,

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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VITAL TRUTH AND DEADLY ERROR.

SECTION I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

If man be indeed a depraved being, it might be anticipated that nothing could pass through his hands without risk of perversion. This expectation has been confirmed by experience. The history of the Church is as much occupied with the relation of heresies within, as of persecutions without. And the past history and present aspect of Christendom alike declare that the "name" of heresy is "Legion," and that there is no one doctrine in the whole circumference of Christianity which may not be the point of departure at a tangent from the system of revelation. All such perversions, however, like the doctrines themselves, may be embraced in two classes, those relating to God and those relating to man. Error in doctrines of the former class produces a change in the *body* of the Scripture system, and is at once apparent as a different system. Error in those of the latter is a departure from its *vital spirit*, and may lie hid under the *same body and substance*, an unseen and unsuspected decay; and hence is the more dangerous of the two. Yet such is their mutual connection, that what begins with error respecting man and the application to him of what is recorded

Religious error two-fold.

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of God, tends ever on to a perversion also of the doctrine concerning God. The violation of the *spirit* of the Gospel leads on to a change in its *substance;* and *secret error*, if uncounteracted, becomes at last *open heresy*. It is against these *inward diseases* that the Church of God needs to be most diligently warned; not only because of their dangerous secrecy, but because it is here that the innate corruption of the human heart has its spontaneous development. Left to itself, it breeds error here as surely as dead flesh breeds corruption. Heresies respecting God are of a different origin. When not the ultimate result of these inward decays *sloughing off* some of the outward members, they arise from some impulse given to the intellect by outward circumstances, such as the force of a heathen education or the mutual repulsion of theological controversy.

Error stereotyped.

As these errors respecting the doctrine of man and his relation to God are the spontaneous growth of the human heart, it is natural to expect, and we actually discover, a fundamental identity in the errors of successive generations. Indeed, we find *just two species of error* perpetually recurring, under aspects somewhat modified, it is true, by the circumstances of their birth, but always recognizable. Both originate in the self-righteousness of the heart; but one takes the form of *unbelief*, the other the form of *superstition*. Under the Jewish dispensation they were represented in the Sadducees and Pharisees. Paul opposed them under the names of "Greeks" and "Jews." And so, through various names and stages of development, we may trace them down to the present time. They often exist when least suspected. We may ourselves be running into them unawares.

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It is therefore proposed here to sketch these errors in their present aspect, to place them in contrast with 'the truth as it is in Jesus,' and, without going into any argument on their respective merits, leave it to be *felt* by every reader, which is in accordance with the word of God; after which it is proposed to note the precise point of divergence from the truth, and exhibit the tendency of each to changes in the very substance of divine revelation. It is not supposed necessary to give references for all the quotations which may be made in the prosecution of this plan, as the design is not to fasten the imputation of error upon individuals, but clearly to set forth existing systems of belief. It may be premised, however, that the quotations are entirely from writers of standing in either the Protestant Episcopal Church of this country or the mother Church of England.

Plan of the essay.

SECTION II.

TRUE SYSTEM OF THE GOSPEL STATED.

BEFORE proceeding to the exhibition of these erroneous systems, let us get a clear view of that system which the apostle Paul has called '*the gospel of Christ*,' as distinguished from 'another gospel.'

They have, of course, much in common. The doctrines of a Trinity of persons in the one God, and of the Incarnation, the vicarious Death, and the Mediatorial Reign of the Eternal Son, lie at the foundation, and form a part of each of these systems. The same, indeed, may be said of the doctrines of Natural Religion.

How far all agree.

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True view of man's nature.

'The Gospel of Christ' declares man to be in a state of ruin—ruin both as to his destiny in the future and his moral condition in the present. For his own actual transgressions he is lost, under the eternal condemnation of Him who has said, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' Moreover, his nature is corrupt. It was born corrupt; as a descendant of Adam he has inherited his fallen nature, a nature as sure to develope into evil as the acorn to germinate into the oak. His "original sin standeth not in the *following* of Adam;" it is "the fault and corruption of his nature," "whereby he is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the *flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit.*" * His "condition is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself of his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God." † Yea, so entirely has he fallen, that he is "of his own nature, fleshly and carnal, corrupt and naught, sinful and disobedient to God, without any spark of goodness in him, without any virtuous or godly motion, only given to wicked thoughts and evil deeds." ‡

What he needs and how provided.

Such being man's condition, he needs both a ransom from condemnation and a cleansing from corruption. God has found him the ransom in the blood of His own Son; incarnate, that He might be our surety, suffering under the load of our sin, dying as the victim of our disobedience, and rising from the dead that He might 'lead captivity captive,' and 'receive gifts for men.' The cleansing is accomplished by the operation of God the Holy Ghost upon the sinner's

* Art. IX. † Art. X. ‡ Homily for Whitsunday.

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heart, turning him from sin to holiness by making him a new creature in Christ Jesus. Both these blessings, the ransom and the cleansing, come to him as the free and sovereign mercy of the God he has offended. They are a divine gift to man, unpurchased and undeserved. The tidings that God is thus reconciled to man by the death of His own Son, and ready to take away the enmity of our carnal hearts by the Spirit of His grace; that He is willing thus to restore us, pardoned and renewed, to our forfeited inheritance of 'life and immortality,' are those 'good news from a far country' which entitle Christianity to its distinguishing name of GOSPEL (*good spell*,) and make it indeed 'glad tidings of great joy' to perishing man. These tidings it is which the Christian ministry has been commissioned to 'preach to every creature.'

The name Gospel, *evangelium*.

But Christ's work for the sinner does not save mankind in the gross, but by individual application. How then is that life-giving application to be made by which the sinner gains an interest in his Saviour? The sins of men were 'laid upon' Christ, or so reckoned as his that He bore the penalty which was due. He took the sinner's place, and was dealt with as though He were Himself the transgressor. So, in return, are the merits of His sufferings and righteousness laid upon the sinner, or so reckoned as his that he reaps their reward. He appears in judgment represented through Christ. The acceptance with God and the title to eternal life earned by his surety are passed over unto him. He is "*accounted righteous* before God." The availing cause of his being thus "accounted" is "only the merit of our

The work of Christ how applied.

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Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* The instrumental medium of its imputation is "Faith," "the only *ordained mean* and *instrument* by which we thus receive, apprehend" and "apply to ourselves the fruits and merits of Christ's death."† Do we ask why? Because faith, (says Bp. Horsley,) "is the *first principle* of that communion between the believer and the Divine Spirit, on which the whole of our spiritual life depends." Is it further asked,

The nature of saving faith.

What is here meant by faith? We reply: "The right and true Christian faith, is not only to believe that holy Scripture, and all the foresaid articles of our faith, are true; but also to have a *sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ.*"‡ "And yet that faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified; *but it shutteth them out from the office of justifying.* So that although they be all present together in him that is justified, yet they justify not altogether."‡

How acquired.

To this "faith" man "cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works."§ 'It is the gift of God.' God the Holy Ghost must apply unto us the work which God the Son hath wrought. The one hath done all *for* us; the other does all *in* us. We must 'be born of the Spirit!' That great change from death to life, the regeneration, conversion, or new birth of the soul, is by the power of the Holy Ghost, operating on the soul according to the laws of its own being—the action of mind on mind—the Infinite on the finite. However it may be with a soul undeveloped,

* Art. XI. † Homily on the Passion. ‡ Hom. on Salvation. § Art. X.

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the operation of the Spirit of God on a mind matured accords with the prayer of Jesus, 'sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.'* We are 'born again by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.'† Hence the Christian ministry was 'sent to preach'—to proclaim truth, and that truth 'the Gospel.'‡ Hence also the Spirit, invisible in essence as 'the wind blowing where it listeth,'§ can be recognized only in the effects of divine truth upon the mind: as it happened in the case of Cornelius and his company, 'while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard the word.'‖

Truth's order and the soul's experience.

The doctrines of the cross are the instrument of the Spirit for the soul's conversion. 'The preaching of the cross is the power of God.'¶ Yet the unawakened sinner esteems it 'foolishness.' He rejects the salvation because he feels not the danger. 'The law is the schoolmaster to lead' such an one 'to Christ.'** It must go before the Gospel to the individual sinner, as it did to the world, to cry with trumpet tongue in the wilderness of sin, 'prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' before 'the crooked' can 'be made straight,' 'and the rough' 'be made smooth,' and the blind soul 'see' and receive 'the salvation of God.'

The Law.

It must shine on the opened eye in unattainable glory as a rule of life. It must thunder in the startled ear its curse upon transgression. The crystal battlements of Heaven's holiness and the smoking furnaces of Hell's retribution confront the awakened soul. The heights of the former it cannot climb; the dread alternative of the

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* John xvii, 17. † 1 Pet. i, 23. ‡ 1 Cor. i, 17. § John iii, 8
‖ Acts x, 44. ¶ 1 Cor. i, 18. ** Gal. iii, 24.

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latter it cannot shun. Then 'by the law comes the knowledge of sin.'* The extremity of his guilt, the certainty of his condemnation, are alike unveiled. The proud rebel is crushed like a worm; the haughty despiser of mercy now cries in alarm, 'what must I do to be saved?' Now Sinai's thunders have done their work;

The Gospel.

a ministry of love must follow. The sinner, fleeing 'the wrath to come,' is led by the Spirit unto Calvary; he sees a cross upreared, and there hangs on it *his Saviour*. 'Tis there his sins are laid; and love and justice speak with mingled voices from that sacred tree. He sees a love which revives his hopes; he beholds a justice which quickens his sense of guilt. The very sight which cheers him humbles him; and while it conveys a hope of pardon, reveals more fully his desert of condemnation. He is destroyed, yet quickened; he dies, and yet he lives—dies in himself, lives in Christ. He is 'dead, and his life is hid with Christ in God.'† In himself he is all ruin; in Christ he has life and peace.

New feelings.

As the Holy Spirit preaches this 'Gospel of salvation' to the despairing sinner, the new life divinely inwrought into his being begins to appear. As the child of nature comes into the world a weeping babe, so he draws his first spiritual breath amid the tears of repentance. His strong convictions of sin settle down into sighs of contrition, and the terrors of condemnation are lost in a deep sense of moral defilement. The same accents of mercy which assuage his alarm deepen his sorrow. 'The *goodness* of God leadeth him to repentance.'‡ 'Cast down, yet not destroyed,' he makes his humble supplication for pardon, and cries out with the Publican,

* Rom. iii, 20. † Col. iii, 3. ‡ Rom. ii, 4.

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'God be merciful to me, a sinner!' 'CHRIST CRUCIFIED' arrests his eye. How glorious, how divine a Redeemer! 'Full of grace and truth.' 'The Lord our righteousness.' 'Tis all for him. He gazes; he listens; he believes. On that dear head he lays his sin; *his* for judgment no more. All God's promises of mercy to those who believe in his Son he believes. In that Son, as one able and willing to save, he also believes. And conscious that he has experienced the faith, he believes that he has received the forgiveness and adoption which were promised. Faith in God's word conducts him to Christ. Faith in Christ appropriates the merits of His work; and faith in God's word, again, assures him that his own name is now 'written in the Lamb's Book of Life.' But he has other evidence than this. By faith the Spirit has united him to Christ, and by this union he is not only justified, but born again. 'The last Adam is a quickening spirit.' While he knows, by faith in God's word, that he has passed from condemnation to acceptance, he knows by experience, that he has 'passed out of darkness into marvellous light.' A mighty transformation has been wrought within him. His eyes discern spiritual things. His heart loves them. Satan's slave is free. The lover of sin now flies her embrace. The man 'without God in the world' rejoices in God as the center and sun of his being. 'Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.' He is 'a new creation in Christ Jesus.'* The dawning consciousness of these things ushers in a bright and blessed morning on the soul, till now in midnight

*2 Cor. v, 17.

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gloom. A peace, tranquil as the Sabbath morn, sheds its serene influence over the mind. A hope glowing with anticipations of heaven lights up his path. The joys of a conscious reconciliation and sonship to God tune heart and voice to thankful praise. With self-distrusting but resolute spirit, the new-born soul starts forward on its course of obedience to God.

Confession of Christ.

His first desire is to confess Christ before the world in the sacraments which He has ordained for that purpose. He exclaims with the eunuch, 'See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized?' With public vows to God, and faith in the mercy pledged by the rite, he receives the seal of the covenant, and with "faith confirmed and grace increased by virtue of prayer to God,"* like the eunuch, he goes 'on his way rejoicing.' Weak and empty, he has found one who 'filleth the hungry with good things,'† and out 'of his fullness' does he 'receive grace for grace.'‡ Faith working in him, and the spirit of God, by his faith, 'worketh by love,' 'purifieth the heart,' and 'overcometh the world.' All duties become delights, all ordinances means of grace; and, looking ever unto that Lord, of the memorials of whose dying love he rejoices to partake, to be 'the Finisher,' as he has been 'the Author,' of his faith, 'with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.'§ Thus are all the people of Christ 'builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.'‖ Thus they become 'strength-

* Art. XXVII. † Luke i, 53. ‡ John i, 16.
§ 2 Cor. iii, 18. ‖ Eph. ii, 22.

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ened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith;' they rise above the region of doubt, overcome their fears, grow 'rooted and grounded in love,' and are increasingly 'filled with all the fulness of God,'* till they pass from grace to glory, and 'see face to face, and know even as also they are known.'†

Characteristics.

The whole design and tendency of this system is to "exalt the Savior, humble the sinner, and promote holiness." It strips all pretence of merit or strength from man, and makes salvation 'the free gift' of God. It leaves man no ground of boasting, no room to glory. 'Christ is all, and in all,'‡ the 'alpha and omega, the beginning and the end.'§ This is, indeed, 'the Gospel of the grace of God,' joyful tidings of his free mercy to sinners. It says, in every part, 'By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.'‖

SECTION III.

A LEGAL CHRISTIANITY EXPOSED.

How made

The first system which I would place in contrast with that Gospel of Christ, which has now been exhibited, may be described as a *legalized Christianity*—a hybrid religion, resulting from a confounding of the two dispensations, combining the *promises* of

* Eph. iii, 16–19. † 1 Cor. XIII, 12 ‡ Col. iii, 11.
§ Rev. i, 8. ‖ Eph. ii, 8, 9.

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the Gospel, as a dispensation designed for fallen beings, with the *terms of acceptance* which obtained under the law, as a dispensation adapted to holy beings. The general character of this scheme may be more distinctly set forth by two statements, which Bishop Horsley says had passed into maxims with the clergy of his day: "That it is more the office of a Christian teacher to *press the practice* of religion upon the consciences of his hearers than to inculcate and assert its doctrines;" and "that *practical religion and morality are one and the same thing;* that *moral duties* constitute the whole, or by far the better part, of *practical Christianity.*"* The same general view of the nature of the Christian dispensation has thus been more fully expressed by one of its advocates: "As the corruptions with which the Gospel has been intermingled, by the fraud of some and the ignorance of others, shall be purged away, Christianity will become again, as it was at the beginning, *nothing more than a rule of life.* The practice of its duties will be the test of faith, the standard of interest, and *the only condition on the performance of which immortality will be expected.*" The benefits which, according to this view, the believer receives from Christ, have been declared to be, "Redemption from a state of certain condemnation and restoration to a state of possible salvation, together with a gracious provision of assistance to make that salvation sure." "But whether this state of possible salvation through Christ may become a state of actual salvation to the believing party, must depend upon the

General character.

Salvation by works.

Bishop Horsely's Charge, 1790.

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use made of the means vouchsafed for that purpose." These means are further defined in the declaration that "*obedience to the moral law*" is "*necessary to bring fallen man into a state of acceptance with God*, by qualifying him for the salvation which has been purchased." Hence, all the benefit a believer gets from Christ is to be "*put into a way* of being eternally happy, *if all things go on well.*"

Baptism the foundation.

The foundation of the soul's interest in Christ, according to this system, is laid in baptism. "If there have been subjection to this in infancy, it was then the party began to be recognized, in the eye not of man only, but of God, as a Christian." "In baptism, duly performed on the suitable subjects of it, these become the subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom, *in the most ample sense of the expression.*" In that ordinance, "divine favor is assured for the present, and divine aid pledged for the future." *If the aid be unimproved, there ensues a fall from grace.*" According to this view, baptism really *amounts to justification.* And indeed, some of this school have not hesitated to call "the admission into Christianity our first justification;" to declare "the word justification *synonymous* to baptism," and that it "belongs to all professed Christians without exception." By baptism, then, all are brought into acceptance with God, and it depends upon themselves whether they continue therein, or "fall from grace." In that rite also occurs the change which gives corrupt nature the ability to maintain acceptance with God; and all that is necessary is to develope by education what was then given. Hence we are told, that "young persons therein made 'members of Christ, children of God, and inher-

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Development of the baptismal germ.

itors of the kingdom of heaven,' if, in consequence of a religious education, and religious impressions made on their minds, they do not *fall into what may be called a state of sin, need nothing* that comes under the idea of a *subsequent conversion;*" and a rebuke is given to what is called "the error of those who instruct baptized persons leading virtuous lives, and not neglecting the exercises of devotion, that there remains for them the necessity of a regeneration, until which they are the children of the devil, and liable to the judgment of God in another life." If, indeed, there should unhappily be "a fall from this state, it can only be recovered by repentance." But if there should not be such a fall, which is contemplated, not only as a possible, but as a frequent event, all repentance, or, at any rate, all deep humiliation, all searching sorrow for sin, all but some general sense and acknowledgment of frailty, would seem to be excluded; for there is this objection made to the system here exhibited as the true Gospel, that "in the educating (according to it) of baptized infants, until of an age susceptible of conversion, it is difficult to conceive in what way they are consistently to be trained up to the worship of God. The only prayers suited to them," (if their regeneration in baptism be denied,) "are those in harmony with 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' It is otherwise on the ground here taken." This, then, is a *fatal objection*, in the view of those who hold a legalized Christianity! We have been accustomed to regard this prayer as one that the Christian should daily offer, even to the end of his pilgrimage. But "it is otherwise on the ground here taken." God help us, if the anguished heart and trembling lips of the

Repentance seldom needed.

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tempted Christian, who finds this the only suitable expression of his wants, cannot "consistently" engage in "the worship of God!" "Justification," we are told further, whether begun in infant baptism or obtained in later years, "is supposed variable, sometimes increasing, sometimes decreasing." To be 'justified by faith' is variously explained. The general notion of faith, as concerned in our justification, is an assent to the truth of Christianity. According to some, it is "an allowance that Jesus is the Messiah." According to others, "'faith only' means an *honest principle;*" or "obedience to the whole religion of Christ, including both belief and practice;" or "the complex of all Christianity;" or "faith in the *concrete*," "faith as comprehensive of all Christian duties." And this faith justifies, not because it unites us to Christ, or is the instrument through which we apply His merits to ourselves, or complies with "the precept of relying on Christ's merit for justification;" but because it "*implies true holiness in the nature of it*," because it *includes* "the other evangelical graces," or because, "like love and repentance, it is a fundamental cause of obedience." "It saves us no otherwise," it is declared, "than by being a spring and principle of our obedience." And this view of faith is accompanied by a strong repugnance to the use of the expression, justification by faith, and a strong disposition to enforce "the necessity of *recommending ourselves* to the mercy of God, and *rendering ourselves worthy* of the mediation of Jesus Christ by holiness of living, and by an abhorrence of vice." And a zeal against the supposed antinomian tendencies of the doctrine of justification by faith leads the advo-

Justification not permanent.

Notions of faith.

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cates of this view to speak much of "good works as the condition of salvation," as "not merely effects, but *coefficient conditions* with faith;" to group all together in the declaration that "faith, repentance, and good works, through the operation of the Spirit, are the conditions upon which God engages to vouchsafe justification;" and even, forcing James into an unnatural opposition to Paul, to affirm that "a man is said to be *justified by works*, because good works are *the condition*, according to the divine appointment, established in the Gospel covenant, as requisite and necessary to his justification; that is, to his obtaining remission of sins through Christ, and acceptance into the divine favor."

Works bro't in.

Evidences.

The evidences by which, upon this scheme, a man is to test his hopes of salvation, are of a corresponding character. It has a decided repugnance to "what are called experiences" in religion, as wanting in soberness of mind, and tending to spiritual pride. "We make no scrutiny into them," says one, but "require such evidence as may be the result of *profession and conduct*." Accordingly, a *serious desire* of the Christian ordinances is esteemed sufficient warrant for the applicant's admission; and the works of his life, to the rejection of any experience and consciousness of his soul, are made the criteria of his condition, to the Christian himself, as well as to others.

Such is the scheme of a legalized Christianity. It is what an inspired apostle would call, "Another Gospel, which is not another." "Another," for it is fundamentally diverse from "the Gospel of Christ;" yet "not another" *Gospel;* for it is *no Gospel*. 'The glad tidings of great joy' to burdened sinners have disappeared,

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and they are left, poor guilty creatures as they are, to '*work out their own salvation with fear and trembling*,' *as best they can.*

SECTION IV.

A CEREMONIALIZED CHRISTIANITY UNVEILED.

The second scheme to be contrasted with 'the Gospel of Christ' is a vastly more ingenious and complicated system, and far better fitted to impose upon an awakened soul. It may be described as a *ceremonialized Christianity*, a system which elevates the outward and prescriptive in religion above the inward and spiritual, by making it the indispensable and invariable means to its attainment.

Union with Christ through the Church, the fundamental principle.

The fundamental principle of this system is thus stated: "Since it is *by aggregation to the body of the faithful that we become members of Christ*, therefore our personal blessedness is the *result of that family union*, which gives us a share in its collective rights."* "Our union with the manhood of Christ, or our participation in His presence, is brought about in our union with the Church, which is His body mystical;"† so that "all the ordinances of the Church, its hallowed things, places and persons—its worship and sacraments—are a series of instruments whereby the sanctified manhood of the Mediator diffuses itself as a life-giving seed through the mass of hu-

* Wilberforce on the Incarnation, p. 350. † Ib. p. 243.

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manity:"* with this radical distinction, however, that "sacraments differ from all other means of grace in that, whereas other things *result from* union with Christ, *they*, on the contrary, *conduct to it*."† In answer, then, to the question, "How can God's image be created anew in the soul?" it is said, "If man had never fallen, it had been sufficient to inherit it: fallen as he is, there must be the gift of a new life." "This new life had its commencement in the fact of the Incarnation." "Out of this beginning arises the whole system of this Christian life. And this heavenly influence is extended to us in *baptism*." "The basis of our spiritual growth is to be laid in it."‡ "The soul's regeneration, like the body's growth, is a protracted process, which the whole of life is not too long to complete. But . . . in that holy rite this process is begun. For there are men joined by heavenly agency to Christ, that the life of their souls may from that day forth have its development."§ A further "development" takes place in *confirmation*. In that rite "through the instrumentality of His minister, the new Head of man's race receives His younger members into *closer union*, and *confirms* those graces which at baptism have already flowed into them from Himself. Thus is a natural mode of converse with God exalted into *a means of supernatural union*." "Christ" is "truly present through the agency of His servants to bless in the laying on of hands, and to *communicate through external means that supernatural life* of which His humanity is the source." After this, "the Holy Eucha-

Baptism.

Confirmation.

* Wilberforce on Incarnation, p. 250.
† Ib. p. 350.
‡ Ib. pp. 331–334.
§ Ib. p. 330.

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rist" is "their *perpetual means of union* with His glorified humanity, *their soul's food*, the medium of the body's immortality."*

Lord's Supper.

The influence of the scheme last considered on the heart of its recipient is *soporific*. It tends to remove the necessity of repentance after baptism from all but gross offenders. The tendency of the one now under consideration is *to keep the conscience in distress*. It is commended by one of its exponents as retaining "something of the *bitterness* of the ancient medicine." And to the opposite system, which affords 'peace with God' to the self-condemned Christian through a continual cleansing by the blood of Christ, applied by faith, the objection is made, that it "stifles the strong emotions of terror and amazement which God has wrought upon the soul, and by an artificial wrought-up peace, checks the deep and searching agony, whereby God, as in a furnace, purifies the whole man, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning."† What then is to be done with the Christian's sins after baptism?

Tendencies.

We are told that "we have no account in Scripture of any second remission, obliteration, extinction of all sin, such as is bestowed on us by the 'one baptism for the remission of sins.'"‡ "The fountain has been indeed opened to wash away sin and uncleanness, but we dare not promise them a second time the same easy access to it which they once had: that way is open but once: it were to abuse the power of the keys intrusted to us, again to admit them thus:

Sin after baptism.

* Wilberforce on Incarnation, p. 346. † Pusey's letter to Bishop of Oxford. ‡ Tracts for the times, No. lxviii. p. 54.

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now there remains only 'the baptism of tears,' a baptism obtained, as the fathers said, with much fasting and with many prayers."* Nor even thus can they attain a sure peace with God: for we are in baptism "washed once for all in Christ's blood, but if we again sin, there remaineth no more such complete ablution in this life. We *must bear the scars of the sins* which we have contracted."† "There are but *two periods of absolute cleansing, baptism and the day of judgment.*"‡ The same writer, however, afterwards confessed that this "statement was imperfect, as making no mention of the healing and comforting power of absolution, or the pardoning grace of the holy eucharist."§ But after all, the most that can be thus obtained is "*a sort of restoration* of that life given . . . by virtue of (baptism); a restoration of *a certain portion* of their baptismal health. It is not *the* new birth simply; that is baptism: but it is a revival *in a measure* of that life; to be received gratefully, as a renewal of a portion of that former gift; to be exulted in, because it is life; but to be received and guarded with trembling, because it is the renewal of what had been forfeited; not to be boasted of, because it is but *a fragment* of an inheritance 'wasted in riotous living.'"‖

Details.

Such is this system in the general. Let us scrutinize more closely a few of its leading features.

The righteousness which justifies.

Primary among these is its view of the righteousness by which a sinner is to be justified In the language of one who was a forerunner

* Tracts for the times, No. lxviii. p. 59. † Tract lxviii. p. 63.
‡ Pusey's letter to Bishop of Oxford. § Letter to Abp. of Cant.
‖ Tract No. lxix. p. 207.

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of this school in its present development, "our being righteous before God always and essentially implies a *substance* of righteousness *previously implanted* in us; and our reputative justification is the *strict and inseparable result of this previous efficient moral justification:*" "the reckoning us righteous *indispensably presupposes an inward reality of righteousness*, ON WHICH THE RECKONING IS FOUNDED."* Or in the words of a later writer, "In justification the whole course of sanctification is *anticipated*, *reckoned*, or *imputed* to us in its very beginning."† "Christ is our righteousness by dwelling in us by His spirit, justifies by entering into us, continues to justify us by remaining in us."‡ If any one should ask how this consists with the acknowledged *declarative and forensic* sense of the word justification, the reply is, "It is a pronouncing holy while it proceeds to make holy!"§ So that "*imputed righteousness is the coming in of actual righteousness.* They whom God's sovereign voice *pronounces* just, forthwith *become* just. He declares a fact, and makes it a fact by declaring it.(!) He imputes, not a name, but a *substantial word*, which, being engrafted in our hearts, is able to save our souls. God's word effects what it announces."‖ What shameful special pleading to get rid of acknowledged statements of the word of God! *The righteousness of justification is then in fact*, according to this scheme, *sanctification;* the two "are really one."¶ Accordingly, justification is on this scheme *progressive:*—"a state admitting of degrees according to the degree of sanctifi-

* A. Knox's Remains, vol. i. p. 306. † Newman on Justification, p. 79. ‡ Ib. p. 51. § Ib. p. 80. ‖ Ib. pp. 86, 87. ¶ Ib. p. 129.

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cation."* "A state admitting of relapses and recoveries, but which is weakened by every relapse, injured by lesser, destroyed for the time by grievous sin; and after such sin, recovered with difficulty, in proportion to the greatness of the sin, and the degree of its wilfulness, and of the grace withstood."† On what quicksands must the trembling sinner build who embraces such a scheme!

Nature and office of justifying faith.

Let us next look at the nature and office of justifying faith according to this scheme. *Previous to baptism*, faith "is without availing power, without life in the sight of God, as regards our justification." "It comes," in baptism "to the fount of life to be made alive." "Its highest praise *before* baptism is that it *leads to it*, as its highest efficacy *afterwards* is that it *comes from it*:"‡ for "being the appointed representative of baptism, it derives its authority and virtue for what it represents. It is justifying because of baptism. . . . Baptism is the primary instrument, and *creates* faith to be what it is, and otherwise is not, giving it power and rank, and constituting it as its own successor. Each has its own office, baptism at the time, faith ever after."§ "Justification needs a perpetual instrument, such as faith can be, and baptism cannot be. Faith *secures* to the soul continually those gifts which baptism *primarily conveys*."‖ "It is a symbol of the nature and mode of our justification."¶ It is "*said* to justify, *not that it really justifies more than other graces*,"** but "as *including all other graces*

* Newman on Justification, p. 129. † Pusey's letter to Bishop of Oxford. ‡ Newman on Justification, p. 275. § Ib. p. 260. ‖ Ib. p. 276. ¶ Ib. p. 281. ** Ib. p. 346.

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and works in it and under it."* "Justification by faith is justification by God's free grace in the gospel, as opposed to every thing out of the gospel."†

Virtue of the sacraments.

The nature of the sacraments, according to this scheme, has already been partially exhibited. Two more declarations will suffice to set the view clearly before us. In infant baptism the infant, we are told, is "the recipient of the greatest blessings which it can enter into the heart of man to conceive, even *the translation from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Christ, and the transfiguration of the whole nature from a state of moral and spiritual debasement and helplessness, into one capable of performing the achievments of saints, and inheriting the glory of angels.*"‡ Such is the view of baptism. The absolute and comparative virtue of the other sacrament is thus set forth: "As holy communion *conveys a more* AWFUL *presence of God* than holy baptism, so must it be the instrument of a higher justification."§

Such, then, is the system of sacramental grace. That it is altogether 'another gospel' from what has been set forth as 'the gospel of Christ,' who can fail to perceive? If we were ourselves disposed to soften down the opposition, and effect a compromise between the two, its own advocates would forbid the banns. We are peremptorily, but truly, told that "the sacramental and anti-sacramental systems are *two different religions*, and to rest our hopes of salvation on the one, is to say anathema to the other." "Allow the one, and the sacramental

* Newman on Justification, p. 346. † Pusey's views of Baptism, p. 22. ‡ Brit. Crit. No. lxvii. p. 75. § Newman on Justification, p. 169.

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system is a groundless superstition; allow the other, and the anti-sacramental system is a presumptuous unbelief."*

SECTION V.

THE BEGINNING OF THESE ERRORS LAID BARE.

These are substantially the three systems held and set forth by members of our own Church; yet not in our own Church only, but, with unimportant variations, and changes of names, existing in all the Churches around us, and which have existed wherever the truths of divine revelation have been intrusted to the keeping of fallible and erring man. They are the growth, not of a time, nor of a Church system, but of human nature, at all times and under every system. Placed thus in contrast with each other, who, at all familiar with the Scriptures, can hesitate in the decision which of them it was that the apostles of our Lord, in the New Testament, 'testified as the Gospel of the grace of God?' But numbers who would not hesitate in a right choice between the 'Gospel of Christ' and these *full-blown* systems, are yet slow in detecting the first germination of unsound doctrine. Many a man has passed the boundary unawares, and unconsciously setting foot in bye-paths of error, has pressed along with honest logic, till he found himself in full possession and zealous maintenance of that from which he ever shrank, and which, up to the hour of the discovery, he always,

* Wilberforce on New Birth, pp. 214–217.

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in name, most ardently opposed. But discovery is made when it is too late to retract. The spiritual instincts and sensibilities have kept silent correspondence with the doctrines progressively embraced; and when the former Evangelical awakes to discover that he holds *another system*, he is prevented from return by a second fact, which he does not discover, that he is himself *another man*. And there is, perhaps, for him no hope of a return, but by the reversed process of changing back the system by changing back the man. Many a melancholy change of views and decline of spiritual character to formalism and party zeal might have been prevented, had the boundary lines been kept clearly defined, and a sign-board, broad-lettered and legible to all, been set up at the very corner where human error first begins its seemingly slight divergence from the divine way of salvation. To find out this angle, and survey these diverging roads, is what we now propose to undertake.

There is a passage in Hooker's celebrated Sermon on Justification which will conduct us at once to the very root of the matter. "They teach, as we do, that all have sinned; that infants, which did never actually offend, have their natures defiled, destitute of justice, and averted from God. They teach, as we do, that God doth justify the soul of man alone, without any other coefficient cause of justice; that, in making men righteous, none do work efficiently with God but God. They teach, as we do, that although Christ as God be the efficient, as man the meritorious, cause of our justice, yet in us also there is something required. Christ hath merited to make us just; but as a medicine which is made for health doth not heal by being made, but by

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being applied, so by the merits of Christ there can be no justification without the application of his merits. Wherein, then, do we disagree? We disagree about *the nature and essence of the medicine whereby Christ cureth our disease;* about *the manner of applying it;* about *the number and power of the means* which God requireth in us for the effectual applying thereof to our soul's comfort."* The two fundamental questions, therefore, whose answers are the roots whence grow, by natural development, these different systems, are in the words of a living bishop, "1. What is *the righteousness* whereby we are to be justified or made acceptable before God? 2. What is *the mode or means* by which that righteousness is applied?" Their respective answers to the former of these questions will reveal the radical contrariety of these two systems to the 'Gospel of Christ.' Their answers to the latter will show us the point at which they first begin to diverge from it.

Test questions.

Gospel answer to the first.

The answer made by the Gospel to the former question may be thus stated, in the language of Archbishop Usher: "The gracious imputation of God the Father, accounting his Son's righteousness unto the sinner, and by that accounting making it his to all effects, as if he himself had performed it."† And this reply may be further unfolded in the words of Bishop Beveridge: "As Christ was made sin for us, not by the inhesion of our sins in him, but by the imputation of our sins to him, so we are made the righteousness of God in him, by the imputation of his righteousness to us, not by the inhesion of his righteousness

* Sermon on Justification, § 45. † Body of Divinity, p. 194.

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in us. He was accounted as a sinner, and therefore punished, for us; we are accounted as righteous, and therefore glorified, in him. He was accounted as a sinner for us, and, therefore, he was condemned; we are accounted as righteous in him, and so we are justified." *

The answer of the legal system.

The answer to this question on the second scheme would be, *A personal righteousness accepted by God* for Christ's sake. "*Obedience to the moral law* . . brings fallen man into a state of acceptance with God, *by qualifying him* for the salvation which has been purchased."

The answer of the sacramental system.

The answer on the third scheme is, "Christians are justified by the communication of an inward, most sacred, and most mysterious gift. From the very time of baptism, they are temples of the Holy Ghost.' "*The Holy Spirit indwelling is the formal cause of justification.*" "The righteousness on which we are called righteous, or are justified, that in which justification results or consists," (we give the statement in its full mistiness,) "this justifying principle, though *within* us, as it must be, if it is to separate us from the world, yet is not *of* us, or *in* us, not any quality or act of our minds, not faith, not renovation, not obedience, not any thing cognizable by man, but a certain divine gift in which all these qualifications are included." It is, therefore, a righteousness *infused in baptism.*

With respect to these answers we say in the words of Bishop Hall, "*To be* IMPUTED *and to be* INHERENT *differs no less than God and man, Trent and heaven.*"

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* On Art. XI.

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fruit is holiness. Yet "it is *not because* of these, its works, that it justifies." In the language of the homily before quoted, "It shutteth them out from the office of justifying." Nor does it justify as being itself a work, an obedience of a more spiritual character; "but simply as it is the empty hand whereby the beggared sinner takes, and relies on what Christ is, and has done for him, to the salvation of his soul."*

How it justifies.

It is here that these two false systems begin to separate from the Gospel. They both diverge from the same point and in the same way. The way for deviation is first prepared by denying that there is any *natural fitness and necessity* for the election of faith as the instrument of justification, and the assertion, on the contrary, that its power to justify arises simply from divine appointment, and that it was elected simply because some *one* act or grace must necessarily be chosen to mark a sinner's transition from condemnation to acceptance; and why not faith as well as any other? But that there is such a *natural* fitness and necessity, which led to its appointment, the apostle Paul himself asserts, 'Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.'† Faith, and faith only, can be the instrument of a salvation which is by free grace, because it not only disclaims and renounces, but is *absolutely inconsistent with* the idea of merit, and *in its very nature* indicates both the lost state of the sinner and the freeness and sovereignty of the grace which pardons and reclaims him. It is, in its very nature, the confession of unanswerable guilt and helpless ruin in the believing soul, and of a free, unmerited sa

How the wall is thrown down.

* M'Ilvaine on Justification, p. 81.

† Rom. iv.

But how shall we find the point where first branches off the track which leads its follower to this fundamentally contrary view of the nature of justifying righteousness? The answers to the second of the questions above stated will reveal it. For, inasmuch as these systems are the *working out of a native feeling of self-righteousness*, we shall find it just where the Gospel salvation *becomes a matter of personal application*; for there will the first wound be inflicted on the pride of the human heart. The view taken of the *nature and office of justifying faith* is the point of separation. The whole scheme, right or wrong, will be a development of what is held on this point. The true office of justifying faith is to be *the instrument* of our justification. "By faith we appropriate the merit of Christ. The *meritorious* cause of our justification is all in our Mediator. The *instrumental* cause is exclusively our faith. That *on account of which* we are justified is the righteousness of Christ. That *through means of which* we are justified is our faith in Christ. The vesture that covers our shame is of God; the *hand that puts it on* is on the part of man."* Moreover, it is the *only* instrument. "In that office faith stands alone. No sacrament, no ministry, no outward ordinance, no inward grace, stands with it, either to divide or make perfect its work."† In *nature* it is a *living principle*, "a faith which, while it essentially embraces the assent of the understanding, establishes its seat in the affections, and will," and "finds its pleasure in obedience,"‡ whose necessary

Point of separation, in the view of justifying faith.

Its true office.

Stands alone.

Its real nature.

*M'Ilvaine on Just., pp. 74, 75. †Ib., p. 76. ‡Ib., pp. 78, 79.

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How the wall is thrown down.

* M'Ilvaine on Justification, p. 81.

† Rom. iv, 16.

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tion only and sufficiently in Christ. It is the very act of flight out of condemned and perishing self into the arms of an all-sufficient and merciful Saviour. So long as this idea of the nature of faith is clearly understood and firmly held, the divine way of salvation is *hedged in* from all danger of mistake and wandering. The denial of this *throws down the fence and opens the gap* for departure from the truth. If faith is the instrument of justification simply because it has been so appointed by God, and *without any inherent necessity* for its selection, then it is just such an instrument as repentance or Love would have been, had they been selected. Then its efficacy for justification lies in the fact that it is *obedience to a command of God.* In other words, it justifies the sinner *as a work of his own*, as an *obedience to which* the promise of salvation has been annexed. This may seem to many a very slight deviation. In words it may be; but in the substance it is fundamental. It brings us at once over the dividing line between salvation by grace and salvation by works. The idea may be refined to the utmost by evangelical expressions, and denials of the presence of merit. But if it justifies simply because it is obedience to God's command, then faith is *the consideration for which* the salvation of the Gospel is granted to the sinner. Here, then, is *the first footstep into error.*

First step in error.

At the next step faith ceases to be a simple, distinct act of the soul, and is viewed as the *pregnant principle* of holiness, justifying, now, not for what it is in itself, but for what it involves and will produce; not as being in itself a highly-refined, but as leading to a more palpable obedience. It is said to justify "as the root of all Christian graces," "the

Another step.

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originating principle of love and every good work." A third step brings us to a change in faith itself. It is no longer a deeply spiritual grace, indicative of a renewed nature—no longer the faith of the heart, but simply of the understanding. It degenerates into *a mere naked assent* to the truths of Christianity, no longer justifying, but only *preparatory* to justification. The real cause of justification is viewed as something *subsequent to faith.*

A third step.

And here these two systems begin to diverge from each other. They separate on the question, what is this *subsequent means of justification* to which faith leads. The former runs into *justification by works of a moral character;* the latter into *justification by the sacraments:*—the former into justification by works done by man in his own strength, with such divine assistance as is common to all mankind; the latter into justification by an infused righteousness coming from the repository of the Church through grace given in baptism and the Lord's supper.

Separation of the two false schemes.

And here let us ask why it is that there should thus be two different systems, when both start at the same point, a denial of the self-renunciatory character of faith, and both originate in the same cause, the desire of man to have some part in his own justification; and why it is that one is adopted rather than the other. The true answer is, that one is the *religion of unawakened nature*, and the other of nature *awakened* but *in the dark.* The former is the religion of an unawakened sinner. By this is meant, not the religion of a man absorbed in this world and wholly forgetful of God. Such an one has no religion. But a man

Why there are two false schemes, and not one.

Religion of unawakened nature.

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whose moral convictions uphold the great truths of religion, while he is unimpressed by any deep and abiding sense of his own corruption;—a man whose judgment teaches him the necessity and advantage of serving God, while his heart has no consciousness of his need as a sinner. Let a man be convinced on theoretical grounds of the duty of being religious, without having been aroused to feel that he himself is a lost sinner, and he naturally falls into this scheme of a legal Christianity. That scheme has, as we have seen, a contempt for all that is *experimental* in religion, by which is meant a present inward experience of the saving power of Christ—even denying anything of the sort to be possible. We are told by one of its advocates, that to "speak of Christ's power, faithfulness and love, of his ability to save, etc., from our own *experience*," "is no more possible than that we should speak of Christ's miraculous cures from our own experience." "Did man indeed NOW *experience* any of these blessings there would be an end of Christian faith: they would then walk, not by *faith* but by *feeling*." "Until we are actually saved, we cannot in any sense experience this salvation." It has, also, as we have already seen, no adequate sense of the evil and extent of sin, limiting the necessity of repentance to gross offenses, and lowering it in nature from a deeply spiritual exercise to merely "a gradual amendment of life and manners." Nor does it know any thing of that conflict of the flesh with the spirit, in the heart of a true child of God, which makes the real difficulty of a holy life. "For religion," we are told, "is easy and natural, pleasant and delightful, unless *we* have made it otherwise by contrary habits: and even then we may be reconciled

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to it without any of this unnatural dread or concern." Nor has it an idea of the direct, sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. "What! *convert* to the Christian faith those who are already regenerated by baptism, who are already made, as our Church catechism declares, the children of grace!" "Conversion," "regeneration," the becoming "dead to sin," and "alive from the dead"—"mean nothing, i. e. *nothing to us, or to any one educated in a Christian country.*" Such is its language. And finally, it is a system in which a soul deeply exercised by a knowledge of its sins cannot abide. It knows no justification but by works:—no evidences of being justified but good works. But in proportion as the soul becomes awakened, it discovers its own sinfulness. Its redoubled efforts after holiness only reveal the strength of its corruption. The evil at first supposed to be slight and superficial, it finds to be deeply inwrought into the very constitution of its being. It soon has to fight, not with detached evil habits, but with whole armies of evil desires swarming forth at every temptation, from a fortress of which they were born possessors. The hope of thus overcoming sin and recommending itself to God is completely disappointed. It must either give up the attempt in despair, and settle down in reckless transgression, or, unless divinely guided to a salvation not dependent on itself, it will find out some system which promises an attainable expiation of its sin. Hence it is, that the legal scheme has always proved a soil in which the sacramental system takes easy root. It only needs an aroused conscience to carry a man from the one into the other.

The sacramental system is the religion of *nature awakened, but unenlightened*, the resort of Religion of

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awakened nature.

"an *unsatisfied earnestness*." It promises a remedy adequate to the extremity of the disease:—remission of all sins, regeneration and an infused righteousness in baptism; "a higher justification" in holy communion; "a baptism of tears," "obtained with much fasting and many prayers," and "the healing and comforting power of absolution," for sins committed after baptism. And it promises, and goes on to supply them with much more, as we shall presently see. It is the very system for a soul which delights in the luxury of self-torture, or which out of its prolonged anguish and agitation would fain derive a title to acceptance with God. And it possesses in addition the charms of a certain awfulness and mysticism, and of an imposing ceremonial.

Thus it is, that there must ever be, as there always have been, two false systems claiming each to be the way of life: the fears and austerities, "the deep and searching agony" of the one would be insupportable to the adherents of the other; the philosophic calmness, the absence of any expedients for the relief of deep distress in that will make it unsatisfying to the devotees of this. And from them both will he escape with delight, as on the wings of a dove, whose eyes have been opened to behold the merits of a crucified and interceding Saviour, as the one perfect righteousness wherein he may stand accepted with God. 'The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus will make him free from the law of sin and death!'

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SECTION VI.

THE PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF ERROR.

I.—THE LEGAL SYSTEM.

We are now to follow out these bye-ways that we may see whither they would lead us. The former of them we left at the point where faith becomes a mere acknowledgment of the truth of Christianity, and deeds of supposed moral worth are associated with it as "the coefficient conditions" of our justification. The value of human actions depends upon the standard to which they are brought, and the principles by which they are tested. There are two ways, therefore, of securing a favorable judgment for the works which man may perform in obedience to the law of God. One way is to impart such a *spiritual quality* to these actions as will increasingly, and at last, altogether accord with that 'spiritual' law. This is the way taken in that gospel which is the power and wisdom of God for the recovery of a lost world. For after having by the sacrifice of Christ held back the penal consequences of man's sinful deeds, it proceeds by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost to make him 'a new creature in Christ Jesus,' infusing such a living principle into his actions, that he will at last once more become entirely conformed to the 'perfect,' 'spiritual,' and 'exceeding broad' commandments of God. This method the legal scheme rejects. The only other way of securing a favorable judgment is to alter the standard to suit the action, to *conform the law of God to the*

Bringing down the law to man's reach.

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works on which it is to pass sentence. This is no easy matter, seeing 'the law of the Lord is perfect.' The most plausible way of doing it, however, is to represent it as the design of Christ's work under the gospel to bring the law down to men, rather than 'by a new and living way' to raise men up to the law. Accordingly there arises the notion that only "a sincere, not an unbroken, obedience is required in the gospel;" that "a great design of the covenant of grace is to remove the difficulty, and soften the rigor of the law of works;" and that "the new covenant admits of a defective obedience." But the holy and immutable character of the divine law, as designed to set forth the glory of its Author, stands in the way of such a representation: and the duties of the first table of the law, especially, are hard to be cramped down to a mere outward and formal service. This gives rise to the expedient of representing the law as given, not to manifest God's glory, but solely to secure man's happiness; and as the relative duties of the second table tend more visibly to this end than the more spiritual duties of the first, superior importance is attributed to them, and the others are undervalued. Thus we are told. "*For our sakes only* was the command given, 'Thou shalt have none other gods but me.'" "The happiness of men is *the end and the measure*, even of our duty to God." "The relative duties are of all the most indispensable;" "the essence of religion consists in a good life;" "preaching and praying, and all other external services, are necessary as far as they support this life," but "no further stress is to be laid upon them:" "too much is made of faith and devotion." The divine commandments are now cut down to the

Depression of the first table.

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measure of man's ability. His nature corresponds to God's law. There is no longer that conflict between them, and that impossibility of doing right, of which the Gospel speaks. Man's nature, therefore, cannot be *fundamentally* depraved. What evil there is in him is the result of habit and education. Thus the doctrine of *original sin*, the inborn depravity of every descendant of Adam, is discarded from the system. In its place come eulogiums on the dignity of human nature. With the doctrine of man's native corruption must go also that of his necessary *renewal by the Holy Ghost*. The necessity for the latter lies wholly in the existence of the former. The evil of man's condition as a sinner is now very much mitigated. Instead of being absolutely ruined and lost, he is still in quite a respectable condition, and with a little assistance perfectly able to retrieve his credit. He therefore requires less in the way of mediation with God. Accordingly we are told that "Christ died more particularly to *make perfect* by his own sufferings *the obedience* of such as may have been almost inadvertent, or casual sinners." And therefore "faith in the merits of Christ *supplies the defects* of our obedience." Christ comes in to *make up* what the sinner cannot *quite* do by himself.

Original sin discarded.

Work of the Spirit rejected.

Christ dying to eke out man's obedience.

And here, I believe, we have reached the end, so far as ministers of our own Church are concerned. No laxity of interpretation or of conscience could cover a wider departure from her standards. The tether is stretched to its utmost tension. A further strain must snap it asunder.

But we have by no means reached the end of the

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road. If Christ's death was not in the strictest sense a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, what could it have been but a most edifying *example* of piety in unjust suffering? There is no middle ground. No thinking mind can long remain poised between the two. The *reality* of an atonement having been already destroyed, even its name is now discarded. The central doctrine of the Gospel, atonement for sin by the death of Christ, is now cast out. The keystone of the arch is thrown down. But why then need He have been God manifest in the flesh? His *divinity is useless* in such a scheme. It only cumbers and perplexes the illogical mind that would still retain it. It involves and is involved in the doctrine of the atonement, and they must stand or fall together. The doctrine of the Trinity can be held no longer. The strong foundation of Christianity is uprooted. We have reached the level of Socinus. And we go down by degrees, driven by resistless logic, from the highest form of Arianism, where Christ is every thing but God, to the bald and dead scheme of those who see in him only a mere man. Whether the path end here, or whether there be a further tendency to the rejection, first of portions, and finally of the whole of the Book of Revelation, let the history of Unitarianism declare.

Atonement given up.

Christ's divinity discarded.

II. THE SACRAMENTAL SYSTEM.

The second of these bye-ways we left at the point where Faith is represented as bringing the sinner to baptism for his justification. The infusion of righteousness said to be made in baptism puts away sin, not only by a remission of its penalty, but by extinction of

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all past sin, both original and actual. But, in spite of this extinction, evil tendencies and desires still visibly remain in those who have been baptized. It becomes necessary, therefore, to deny that this forms any part of that original sin which is declared done away. But if it does not, then it existed in Adam before the fall, and was consistent with his native innocence. This, then, requires a new theory of original righteousness. It is found in the notion that after his creation, Adam received the gift of some supernatural grace in addition to his natural perfections. "Whereas we have gained under the Gospel what we lost in Adam, and justification is a reversing of our forfeiture, and a robe of righteousness is what Christ gives, *perchance a robe is what Adam lost.* If so, what is told us of what he lost, will explain what it is we gain. Now the peculiar gift which Adam lost certainly seems to have been a *supernatural* clothing. Christ clothes us in God's sight with *something over and above nature;* which Adam forfeited."

Original sin.

Original righteousness.

We have seen the difficulty experienced by the advocates of this scheme, in disposing of post-baptismal sins. "Now what," asks the bishop before referred to, "is the natural consequence of such a miserable, comfortless doctrine as this? A man who can never know whether his amount of inherent righteousness is sufficient, will always be ex-cogitating some device or other by which God may be more effectually propitiated and satisfied. A gloomy, or a poverty-stricken spirit resorts to those unbidden austerities and severe bodily macerations, by which it is hoped that sins may be fully expiated, and heaven meritoriously attained. In such righteousness there is

Expedients to get rid of sin after baptism.

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something that seems tangible, measurable, appreciable. A man can count his penances, measure his pilgrimages, weigh his gifts, and thus keep account of his righteousness, and at last come to account himself sufficiently righteous to be at peace with God. Sinners of various descriptions will resort to various modes of establishing such a righteousness; the rich will purchase what they are not able to work out, by the prayers of priests, and the merit of saints, and the virtue of indulgences, to save themselves the pain of austerities. Thus will arise the monster of *supererogatory merit*. And so there grows out of the mere effort of the troubled conscience, to supply the awful uncertainty arising from a scheme of justification, which knows nothing better for righteousness than our own works and personal holiness, that whole retinue of vain devices for the making of a righteousness of our own, and easing the conscience with nostrums of man's quackery, by which the Church of Rome has been for so many centuries so defiled and degraded."* And again: "Justification is by infused righteousness. This infusion takes place in baptism. Baptism can not be repeated. But sin after baptism destroys the grace of baptism, that is the justifying efficacy of the infused righteousness. The light is quenched. The bright mirror is marred. What shall remedy the loss? There remains no sacrifice for the reinfusion of righteousness. The eucharist is only for its increase and brightening. The merits of Christ will not answer, because they are only applied for justification in baptism. Faith will not answer, for it is *subordinate to baptism*, and has been killed by sin after

* M'Ilvaine on Ox. Div. pp. 89, 90.

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baptism. A *new sacrament*, such as that of *penance*, or else *a purgation between death and judgment*, is absolutely necessary to such a scheme."* And can we not see the felt necessity for such a purgation in the following language? "Who can tell, but in God's mercy, the time of waiting between death and Christ's coming, may be profitable to those who have been his true servants here, as a time of maturing that fruit of grace, but partly formed in them in this life; a school-time of contemplation, as this is of discipline, of active service? Such surely is the force of the Apostle's words, that He that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it *until* the day of Christ—not stopping at death, but carrying it unto the resurrection—as if the interval between death and his coming, was by no means to be omitted in the process of our preparation for heaven."†

Purgatory.

This impossibility of removing sins committed after baptism, makes the burden on the conscience too heavy to be borne. Some method must be devised of diminishing the load, if not by removing sin altogether, at least by preventing its too rapid accumulation. The notion entertained of original sin comes in to meet this necessity. The concupiscence of the heart, if not the result of a fallen nature, can not properly be called sin, and neither deserves the same condemnation, nor requires the same mode of removal as the sins of the life. Hence the distinction between *mortal and venial sins*, and all the practical abominations to which that distinction leads.

Mortal and venial sin.

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* M'Ilvaine on Ox. Div. pp. 250, 251. † Newman's Paroch. Sermons pp. 411, 412.

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We have seen the efficacy attributed to Priestly Absolution. But how is one entrusted with the awful power of the forgiveness of sins, to be able to exercise it with a due discrimination? Must there not be first a full knowledge of the case in hand? And so grows up *auricular confession*, a practice already encouraged, and attempted to be carried on both within our own Church and the mother Church of England.

Auricular confession.

The Holy Eucharist is supposed effectual to minister grace, because of the *actual presence of Christ therein*. This presence, however, is not a spiritual presence in the heart of the faithful recipient, nor is it a material presence of Christ's real body and blood under the form of bread and wine; but it is something between the two—something between a spiritual and a material presence! Must not a notion so radically unphilosophical develope into something further? The way for a development is thus prepared: "This body (Christ's human body) can not die again, nor can its material place be other than at God's right hand; yet must *this be the very body* which we present to the Father; for were it aught besides, our dependence would not be on that anointed first-fruit of man's nature, which, that it might be the instrument of mediation, was made personally one with God."* "So that what is done by His ministers below, is a constituent part of that general work which the one great High Priest performs in heaven: through the intervention of His heavenly Head, the earthly sacrificer truly exhibits to the Father that body of Christ, which is the one only sacrifice for

Transubstantiation.

* Wilberforce on Incarnation, p. 285.

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sins; each visible act has its efficacy of those invisible acts of which it is the earthly expression; and things done on earth are one with those done in heaven."* Here we have the ubiquity of Christ's material body, and an earthly sacrificer exhibiting that body in the Holy communion. What more is wanting for the doctrine of Transubstantiation?

Priestcraft.

And what words can sufficiently express the dignity of an order who are the creators and sacrificers of the body of Christ, the sole media of grace to men, and whose absolution is of such high consequence to the sinner? Extorting the very secrets of the heart upon the rack of the confessional, and holding over the head of the penitent, consciously degraded by the inquisition to which he has been subjected, all the terrors of eternal damnation, who could withstand their will? Here is the foundation of that priestly tyranny under which all Europe groaned for ages previous to the Reformation.

Doctrine of Reserve.

And now the preaching of the Gospel has become an unessential and antiquated part of the machinery for the conversion of the world. The doctrines of redemption are discovered to be too sacred a mystery to be exposed to vulgar gaze. They must be covered with a veil of awful reserve. Instead of being 'the power of God unto salvation to every one who will believe' them, they are 'the secret of the Lord' only to be unfolded after long perseverance and fidelity in the Christian race. "A sinner becomes a Christian under the preaching of 'natural piety,' 'of common honesty, repentance, judgment to come, fast-

* Wilberforce on Incarnation, p. 287.

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ing, alms and prayer.' This sort of preaching will make him desire salvation, and therefore desire baptism, as that power of grace by which 'God saves us.' This *desire of baptism* is said to be the very essence of justifying faith. He comes and is baptized. Now he is a Christian, and without any knowledge of Christ. Truth is not taught him, but kept for him in the Church, behind the altar. It is his, because he is part of the Church. She gives him the benefit of its possession, without the necessity of his knowing what it is. It is enough that the Church knows. The more obedient he shall be to the Church, the more she will reward him with a knowledge of her secrets. By-and-by he may come 'fully to know that we are saved by faith in Christ only,' (in the sense of this system,) but his attaining eternal life has no connection with any such knowledge. All things belonging to his salvation are to be sought and found in, to be begun and finished by, the Church; through her priesthood, as her *hand* by which, and through her sacraments, as the *channels* through which, out of her own '*abiding*,' *inherent* treasure of grace, deposited in her as a storehouse at the beginning of the Gospel, she communicates regenerating and justifying grace to the sinner. She is, to the sinner, Christ. The language is not too strong for the head writers of this system. She is all the Christ to which they teach the sinner to look *directly* for grace."*

But how can such teaching be reconciled with the opposing declarations of the Holy Scriptures? And how is it to feign for itself divine origin and authority? Obviously there must be discovered for it some war-

* Bishop M'Ilvaine's Charge, 1843, pp. 19, 20.

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rant other than that which the written word of God contains. It is found in the notion of *a word unwritten*, "another great gift equally from God" with the Bible. It is now discovered that Church tradition is "parallel to Scripture, not derived from it, and fixes the interpretation of disputed texts, not simply by the judgment of the Church, but by the authority of that Holy Spirit who inspired the oral teaching itself, of which such tradition is the record."* And now has this system a rule of faith suited to every emergency. This "tradition-doctrine can take in whatever is convenient for proof. If it need the aid of the Apocrypha, it embraces it. If it need the writings of the schoolmen, it puts them on a footing with the early fathers. The hardest canon to be settled is the canon of the books of authoritative tradition."† And what now is the result? In the words again of the revered bishop of Ohio: "Allow the authority of tradition as the rule, under any form, and then, since but a small part of men can judge for themselves of what is tradition, or what it teaches, and private judgment would be at least as much confounded amid the works of the fathers as the writings of the Apostles, you must have an *authoritative interpreter* of tradition to decide what are its Catholic sources, and what are the Catholic verities to be derived therefrom. But who shall authoritatively interpret the Church? She can not speak but by representatives. Where are they? General councils are no more. The ministry of the Church alone remains to be the *ecclesia docens*, the voice of the body of Christ interpreting the traditions which interpret the word of

Tradition a rule of faith.

* Keble's Primitive Tradition, p. 23. † M'Ilvaine's Charge, p. 12, Note.

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God, which tells me what I must do to be saved. The authoritative rule of faith in this system, therefore, is really the word of the ministry of the Church as the teaching of the Spirit of God."* But who is to reconcile the discrepancies of the ministers of the Church?

Infallible head.

To whom are they to appeal in the conflicts of opinion that must arise in the individual survey of this vast and obscurely-bounded territory of written and unwritten tradition? How is there to be secured any uniformity of teaching by the ministers of the Church? Or is what is pronounced heresy by one, to be pronounced Catholic truth by another, while there is no appeal from either, and each is armed with the power of the keys to compel the assent of men to all that he sees fit to teach? There must be some *infallible center of unity*, if there is to be any stability in the faith on such a scheme. The anxious wayfarer, floundering in this bog of unsettled tradition, mired the deeper in every attempt to follow this *ignis fatuus* of an oracle in every pulpit, cries out for aid to reach some firm foundation for his faith. And here Rome opens wide her massive gates to the pilgrim's feet, and the voice of her Infallible Head bids him enter and be at peace. He halts and recoils at the suggestion. The lingering effects of early training, the force of long habit and association, hold him back. But how can he endure the yielding mire, the darkness, the buffetings of such tempestuous doubts and fears, while the ancient walls of Rome, glaring with artificial splendor, invite him to repose? The pressure of necessity is stronger than his horror of a *name*. He makes obei-

* M'Ilvaine's Charge, p. 11, Note.

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sance to a Pope, and lies down to rest in the embrace of the mistress of abominations. He has only to believe and do as he is told, and she becomes responsible for his soul till the day of judgment.

If the logical necessity for the development of this system into Popery, if the multitudes who have traveled this road to Rome, are not enough to convince us of the necessary connection between the notion that faith justifies, not as a mere appropriation of Christ's righteousness, but by its meritorious character as an act of obedience, and full-blown Romanism, let Rome herself confirm our belief. When the divines of the Council of Trent were assembled, in consequence of the progress of the Reformation, to deliberate on the interests of the Church, it was said of Luther's attempt to overthrow indulgences and other gross corruptions of Rome, that "Justification by Faith only seemed to him a good means to effect this." "Therefore by a contrary way," (argued the council,) "he that will establish the body of the Catholic doctrine must overthrow this heresy of justification by faith only."

Testimony of Rome herself.

Thus have we seen the end of each of these byeways, which diverge in so seductive a region from the highway of salvation, cast up in Holy Scripture for God's redeemed. It is a distinct and interesting subjest of inquiry, but one upon which we can not now fully enter, how much *real agreement* there may be between systems apparently so diverse. The result of such investigation would be that, as the two break away from the Gospel at the same point,—the nature and office of justifying faith, as they move on under the same impulse,—the desire

Substantial identity in the two systems.

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of man to have somewhat to do in his own acceptance with God, so it is in both substantially the same hope that is offered to the sinner, and the same view of man's nature and Christ's mediation upon which that hope finds its perilous foundation. As for the *ground of a sinner's hope of pardon*, it is in both a righteousness *within himself*. And the flimsy distinction which in the one case is set up of a righteousness that is *in* us, yet is not *of* us, we overturn at once by the short logic of Hooker: "If it is in us, then it is ours, as our souls are ours, though we have them of God." The *possibility of such a hope* to fallen man ariseth in both from an unsound and unscriptural view of human nature, denying man to be the inheritor of a depraved nature,—in the one system directly and openly,—in the other, virtually and really, by setting up a new view of man's original righteousness, founded on a subtle and unreal distinction between the 'image of God' and a grace of righteousness superadded; as if, (to use the illustration of an old writer,) one who had made a *round* body were afterwards to add to it *roundness* as a distinct quality. The Pelagianism of the one is avowed, that of the other is denied, and cloaked over by metaphysical subtleties. The real identity of the two is thus set forth by an English writer of the seventeenth century: "The difference between the Pelagians and Papists is not in respect of possibility or impossibility, but in respect of greater or less difficulty. For the Papists do not acknowledge that men by nature are dead in sin, and utterly deprived of the spiritual life: but that they are fickle and weak, and tied with the bands of sin, so that they can not fulfill the law of God, unless they be holpen and loosed by grace: but

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being holpen by grace, then the fulfilling of the commandment is easy to them. The Pelagians likewise confess, that by the grace of God, which they call *bonum naturæ*, or the power or possibility of nature, they were enabled; by the grace of God vouchsafed in His Word and Law, guided and directed; by the justifying grace of God freed from the bond of their sins; and by the sanctifying grace of God holpen with more ease to fulfill the commandments of God. So that the Papists, although they do not with the Pelagians *deny* original sin, or the necessity of saving grace: yet they do *extenuate* the original corruption, and so magnify the *strength* of nature, that they differ not much from them. And as touching the other difference; though the Papists hold that a man can not be without sin for any long time, though for some short time, (in which short time, if he shall say he hath no sin, he shall make St. John, and not himself a liar—1 John i: 8,) yet they say they may be without all sins excepting those which they call *venial;* which they do so extenuate, that indeed they make them no sins, as being no *anomies* or transgressions of the Law committed *against* the Law, or repugnant to charity, but only *besides* the Law; such as may well stand together with perfect, inherent righteousness. For they say he only is a righteous man in whom there is no sin, and yet that there is no man so righteous, as that he liveth without these venial ones. But if they be besides and not contrary to the Law, then they are neither commanded nor forbidden, and so no sins at all, but things indifferent."* Thus do these systems agree in the representation of

* Downame on Justification, pp. 503, 504.

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human nature as yet capable of inherent righteousness, and in depriving the Law of God of that spirituality of requirement which is its chief glory.

Now what is the effect of these views in both systems on the doctrine of Christ's mediation? In the one case, we have seen the doctrine of redemption by the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, openly stricken from its central position in the firmament of Christian truth. In the other case, the same doctrine is with "sacred reserve" carefully withheld from any "indelicate exposure" to popular apprehension. It is not necessary to be known that a sinner may be converted. It is not essential to the vigor of a Christian life. It is not essential to the final forgiveness of sins and admission into heaven. A man may live and die in the embrace of the Church, and by her be transmitted to heaven, without any real knowledge of Christ's death for the expiation of sin. Now what is the difference between the two? The 'one Mediator between God and man' is as effectually and really dethroned by this setting up of human mediators, as by the open rejection of his atonement for sin. Accordingly, Archbishop Usher long since declared, "it is *the point of His Priestly office which the Church of Rome strikes at;* that is, whether Christ hath reserved another righteousness for us, besides that which as a King, he works in our hearts; whether he hath wrought forgiveness of sins for us."* "We deny the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, (says Hooker); we imbase, disannul, annihilate the benefit of his bitter passion, if we rest in those proud imaginations, that life everlasting is deservedly

* Usher's Sermons, No. xvi.

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ours, that we merit it, and that we are worthy of it."

Thus is there a real affinity between these false systems of doctrines, apparently so unlike; and the *practical working* of the latter, when it has long had the upper hand in a community, is to drive men into the ultimate gulf of the former. There is in it a rejection of reason from matters of faith which must lead in turn to a rejection of faith, by a self-conscious and unsanctified reason. The uniform tendency of Romanism has been to produce infidelity in thinking men. Thus do these roads of man's invention converge at the last, and history presents us the spectacle of men who *have traveled to the end of Socinianism*, shaking hands with men who have *traveled to the end of Popery*, on the platform of infidelity.

SECTION VII.

CONCLUSION.

We have now had a view of the two main systems of religion, which pass with multitudes for the Christianity of the New Testament, but which the Apostle Paul has condemned as 'another Gospel,' the device of those who 'would pervert the Gospel of Christ.' We have seen their beginning; we have traced them to their close. The subject as thus presented gives rise to some practical reflections with which we would bring this discussion to an end.

1. We may see from this survey of the diverse views actually held in our own Church at the present time, and of the ends to which they must lead, if those who

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hold them are true to their own principles, the *impossibility of avoiding controversy*, even with the brethren of our own Church. It is impossible that these different systems should consent to live together in fraternal and equal communion. They are as opposite as light and darkness. The only way in which they could be held without collision, would be for the advocates of each to become wholly indifferent to truth and error. If there be the least vitality, if there be any earnestness of purpose or real conviction on either side, conflict must ensue. It is in vain for well-meaning men to entreat for peace. Even peace is less important than truth. And 'the wisdom which is from above must be *first pure*, then peaceable.' "There never was, and never will be, charity in softening down real distinctions; open hostilities are ever a shorter road to eventual peace than hollow and suspicious alliances."* This language of the leading journal of the sacramental party in England, should teach a lesson to those real friends of the Gospel, who are still desirous of maintaining such "hollow and suspicious alliances" as would result from the attempt to smooth over the serious diversities of doctrine, now held in the Episcopal Church. The result of this strong peace-spirit in years past, has been that error has been allowed to work almost unchecked, that many honest but undiscriminating minds have been beguiled into these false systems by their apparent coincidence with truth, and have been gradually forced both by outward and inward pressure along their development into antichristian doctrine. Especially, many a young and

* British Critic.

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enthusiastic mind is now lost to the Church, or now stands pledged to a high development of error, who might have been rescued from danger, had there been more open and stirring discussion of the points here brought under review. The only way to prevent the continued increase of this mischief, is to 'put the battle in array' between truth and error; not with personal animosity of contending champions, but with the hand of love fraternally outstretched to rescue those whose principles we attack as subversive of the Gospel of Christ;—'in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure would give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are led captive by him at his will.'

The beginning of error to be watched.

2. *The beginnings of error* are to be watched and guarded against, both in ourselves and others. No error can be looked upon as slight which concerns the question of our acceptance with God. We have seen how apparently slight is that first deviation from Gospel truth, which yet leads ultimately and of necessity either to Socinianism or Popery. 'The beginning of' error, as well as 'strife, is as when one letteth out water.' Let the false notion of justifying faith be once adopted, and there is no escape from the full-blown systems to which it leads; unless the mind be so sluggish that it can hold its principles forever in embryo, or unless the power of divine grace, keeping the soul in humble reliance on Christ, neutralizes the effect of its false theology, and represses its further increase. But what security can we have that this will always be the case in any individual? Onward pressure from without may drive the most

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inactive mind to the legitimate conclusions of its premises, or cause a reflective and logical understanding to sweep along the opposing affections of a renewed heart, on the bosom of its own current. It is thus that the late movement which began in Oxford has carried on with it such numbers of clergy and laity. The seed was already there; the times only caused it to germinate. It may well be doubted, on the one hand, if a single one, save of the young who having since grown up under its influence, have imbibed it as a whole, has been entangled in this movement who had not the germ of the system already in possession: as it is matter of observation, on the other hand, how few of those who then held the position of what is called "old fashioned high churchmanship," have been able to stem the current which has borne their brethren to Puseyism, and some from thence to Rome.

Importance of clear views of justification.

3. Hence we see the importance of *a clear and discriminating view of the whole subject of a sinner's justification before God.* It may safely be affirmed that not one who fully understood this subject, experimentally as well as theoretically, has been carried from his moorings by the swell of this tidal movement to the Church of Rome. But how few, comparatively, there are who have this clear insight into this all-important question, and can discern the first appearance of deviation from the 'truth as it is in Jesus.' How many are unconsciously in error! And how many more so confused in their conceptions that they can not impart accurate instruction to others! And yet this is, as Luther calls it, "articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ." The Church will stand or fall, according as she is founded wholly on the

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rock of the Redeemer's righteousness, or partly upon any foundation which man's ingenuity can uprear in the quagmire of human corruption. How important that the clergy should clearly understand this central doctrine of the faith! How important that it should be fully and explicitly unfolded to their congregations, both from the pulpit and through the press! When our clergy see and set forth this doctrine in all purity and precision, we shall have no more congregations, nominally evangelical, ready to be led off into error by any preacher whose oratorical abilities may have commanded their admiration. When our people have learned to understand and value it, they will no longer be satisfied with the confused and inconsistent, if not wholly heterodox, teaching to which so many are now content to listen.

Danger of ambiguous language.

4. Another reflection to be derived from this discussion is, *the danger of ambiguous forms of speech, and the duty of avoiding them.* Much of human error upon all subjects has arisen from the use of language susceptible of two interpretations. It is especially so in the department of Theology: not only because the language of the science is transferred and accommodated from other topics; but because also the human heart is prone to error and corruption in religion, by reason of its fallen nature. Now on all subjects in Theology, but especially upon those relating to the operations of grace in the soul of man, there have long been in use forms of expression very loose and equivocal,—meant to convey a right sense, but capable of being taken in a wrong one. It is invariably under these that error first makes and hides its entrance. What was meant to be used in one sense

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is afterwards used in another: and its original use, especially in ancient or authoritative standards, is appealed to for countenance and support of error. It is a solemn duty either to avoid the use of such language, or to accompany it with an explicit declaration of the sense in which it is used. An example of what is meant may be found in the word "regeneration." The ordinary acceptation of the term is now a spiritual new-birth of the soul. But there are those who think its use in the standards of the Church to have been wholly *external*, and that by its connection with baptism is meant merely a change of state, the acquirement of a covenant right to the *privileges* of the Church of Christ. Such an one may speak, and insist on the truth, of Baptismal Regeneration. But the chances are ten to one that he will be understood of a spiritual change of nature effected in that rite. A still more striking and dangerous instance is in the use of the word "condition," as descriptive of the relation of Faith or good works to Justification. The word has really *three* distinct significations. It may mean the *meritorious or availing cause* by which any thing is produced. In this sense the *righteousness of Christ* is the only "condition" of justification, and with respect to us it is *unconditional*. Or it may mean the *instrumental cause* or necessary *medium* of communication. In this sense *Faith* is the only "condition" of justification. Or it may mean simply a *necessary accompaniment*, that without whose presence something else never exists, a *sine qua non*. In this sense good works, all Christian graces, may be called "conditions" of justification: for no man can be justified, whose faith is not that living 'faith which worketh by love.' Now,

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to speak of good works as the "condition" of justification, while true in the *third* sense, may, and probably would, be understood in the second, in which it is *false;* and might even be taken in the first, in which it is *monstrous.* Other illustrations abound in current modes of expression respecting the efficacy of the sacraments, a priestly power and apostolic succession in the Christian ministry, and the authority of the Church: but this is not the place to attempt their enumeration. Let every one, then, beware that he is not himself imposed upon by some equivocal expression which he may hear or use, and that he is not guilty of thus misleading others also.

5. A similar caution, equally in place, is to *beware of practices which symbolize false doctrine.* Things in themselves indifferent often derive importance from the circumstances of their introduction, or the purposes they are designed to subserve. Thus questions of posture, and raiment, and genuflexions, and of the arrangement and decoration of churches, may cease to be matters of indifference, or of mere taste, and required to be considered in the very serious light of inlets of destructive error. Whether a communion table should be solid like an altar, or open like a table; whether it should be conspicuously elevated, and separated by steps from the residue of the chancel; whether the officiating minister should kneel in approaching it, and read the prayers with his face in that direction, and bow towards it at the name of Jesus, and deliver his sermon in a surplice, these and such like questions might at some times be treated with unconcern; but when they form a part of an evil system, when they are designed to be symbols of a human priesthood in

Symbols of error.

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the ministry of the Gospel, and of a continuation in the Holy Communion of that sacrifice for sin made once for all by Christ, they are not only to be protested against when found in association with these errors, but to be feared as tending to introduce them. For we are but poor creatures of sense, affected in spite of ourselves by our daily habits and associations. We may be all sound at the beginning, but habitual use of error's appendages will be as dangerous as to put on the garments of one who has died of the plague. We may be insensible of any evil influence, we may still rejoice in reputed orthodoxy, but the functions of spiritual health will be seriously impaired, the system progressively disordered, until at last the infection will come with power, and hurry the soul into hopeless collapse. When infection is brooding in the atmosphere we breathe, more than ordinary care of vesture and habits is required; and things harmless at other seasons become pregnant with disease.

Tendency of the age to be resisted.

6. There is always a pressure on each individual by the movement of the collective mind, or in other words by the *tendency of the age*. As this tendency results from the common impulse of a society mainly unsanctified, it must always bear perilously on 'the faith once delivered to the saints.' Whatever truth and necessity there may be in the oscillations of public sentiment, reacting from some erroneous extreme, the mighty mass of united mind will always go as far the other way. It is always in extremes. And he who would hold fast the truth must get close to the central point of divine revelation, and plant his feet in firm opposition to the movement of the masses. Society is now reacting *from dead formalism*

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to an overworking of the mere machinery of religion. Camp-meetings and magnificent temples, got-up revivals and daily communions, anxious benches and confessionals, are among the heterogeneous indications of the one tendency to a bustling externalism,—working alike by a mystical symbolism which impresses the overawed senses, and by a confused excitement which makes trophies of the victims of an overwrought nervous system; and having, by a removal of all real tests of a change of heart, the one effect of crowding multitudes of unconverted sinners into a membership of the visible Church. Such being the pressure of the times, it becomes us to be on our guard, and to withstand its influence; to seek a deeper spirituality both of sentiment and feeling in ourselves and others; to save truth from being superseded in its office of chief instrumentality for the conversion and sanctification of the soul, by either nervous excitements or impressive ceremonies of human manufacture; and to insist upon a faith which 'worketh by love,' 'purifieth the heart,' and 'overcometh the world,' as the indispensable evidence of any man's right to be called a child of God.

Danger of resisting errors on one side exclusively.

7. Let us be on our guard against being betrayed by too zealous an opposition to merely *one* species of error. There is a tendency in all minds to be driven by controversy farther off from what we are opposing. Now in a clear sea, with only one enemy, we can not get too far away from that one. But surrounded on all sides by error, compelled to hold the course of truth steady amidst all their concealed dangers, there is great hazard in being too much occupied with one class of opponents. And should that one happen to be of a less dangerous char-

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acter, the risk of fatal shipwreck is increased. There are questions of order, and there are other questions of vital truth, to both of which the attention of the Church must be directed. There are irregularities of discipline on one side, and perversions of saving truth on the other. And it has happened to many in a controversy with the former, heated to an unnecessary degree by local excitement or educational prejudice, to be driven into the fellowship of those who were guilty of the latter. It is no easy matter to be on all sides well guarded. But let us not be guilty of the folly of placing the weakest battery and fewest guards where the most deadly enemies of the faith are stationed.

8. And finally, for the comfort of our own hearts, the stability of our own peace with God, for the cleansing of our consciences from those sins into which we are daily betrayed, let us learn and tread yet more and more the way of immediate access to the cross of Christ by faith. "The best things that we do (says Hooker) have somewhat in them to be pardoned. . . We see how far we are from the perfect righteousness of the law; the little fruit which we have in holiness, it is, God knoweth, corrupt and unsound: we put no confidence at all in it, we challenge nothing in the world for it, we dare not call God to a reckoning, as if we had him in our debt books: our continual suit to him is, and must be, to bear with our infirmities, to pardon our offences." And what is the only hope that can sustain us in this growing acquaintance with the sinfulness of our own nature? Let the wise and Christian Hooker still be our teacher: "Christ hath merited righteousness for as many as are found in him. In Him God findeth us, if we be faithful,

Growing knowledge of the fulness of Christ.

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(i. e. believing); for by faith we are incorporated into Him. Then although in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous, yet even the man who in himself is impious, full of iniquity; full of sin; him being found in Christ through faith, and having his sin in hatred through repentance; him God beholdeth with a gracious eye, putteth away his sin by not imputing it, taketh quite away the punishment due thereunto by pardoning it; and accepteth him in Jesus Christ, as perfectly righteous as if he had fulfilled all that is commanded him in the law: shall I say more perfectly righteous than 'if he had himself fulfilled the whole law?' I must take heed what I say: but the Apostle saith, 'God made him which knew no sin to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Such we are in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God himself. Let it be counted folly, or fury, or frenzy or whatsoever. It is our wisdom and our comfort; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned, and God hath suffered; that God hath made Himself the sin of men, and that men are made the righteousness of God."*

* Sermon on Justification, § 7, 6.

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